

*Holloman AFB Fire/Crash Rescue Station, Mental Health Care for Veterans and Advanced Appropriations for the VA all Top Priorities for Teague*□

Washington, DC - Friday, Congressman Harry Teague voted to support our troops and honor our veterans by funding critical veterans health services and the construction of key facilities for supporting our military. Since being sworn into Congress, Congressman Harry Teague has fought for advanced funding for the VA and to support our troops and local military facilities.

"This bill improves health care service that so many veterans rely on throughout southern New Mexico," said Congressman Harry Teague, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "These are resources the brave men and women who serve our nation need and deserve."

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act also included \$10.4 million in funding to support the F-22 mission at Holloman Air Force Base. Currently, the F-22 fleet is supported by an outdated fire station whose distance from the F-22 hampers the ability of emergency personnel to respond quickly to emergency situations.

"The F-22 Raptors are the best our military has to offer in air defense and we are proud to house them in New Mexico," said Congressman Harry Teague. "As home to the F-22s, it is critical that we keep the support facilities on Holloman Air Force Base in the best condition possible. This funding will help protect the F-22 fleet, but it will also help ensure the health and safety of the service men and women stationed at Holloman. "

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act will strengthen quality health care for more than six million patients - including 419,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill also provides advance funds for veterans health services in 2011, a provision that Congressman Harry Teague has consistently fought for during the budget process.

"The medical needs of our veterans should never be subject to delayed funding," said Congressman Harry Teague "Advanced funding for the VA is the only way to ensure sufficient,

timely and predictable funding to get the men and women who have served our country the care and benefits they need."

The legislation includes improvements in electronic health records and paperless benefits processing to make veterans health care more efficient, additional oversight and auditing of our veterans health care system, and new practices to improve access to care for veterans in rural areas. The bill also invests in mental health services and critical medical and prosthetic research to serve our wounded warriors returning from battle.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

### KEY INVESTMENTS

**Historic Increases in Support of our Military and Veterans:** With passage of this bill, Congress has provided a 58 percent increase in funding for veterans health care and benefits since January 2007. This funding has resulted in a total increase of 8,300 claims processors, 145 community-based outpatient clinics, 70 Vet Centers, and more than 47,000 additional Veterans Health Administration employees. These additional resources will provide our veterans with their benefits more quickly and improve access to health care and other services. Congress has also funded several initiatives to improve the quality of life for our military and their families to include: \$2.8 billion for new military hospitals, \$1 billion for new child care centers to serve 20,000 military children, and \$570 million in additional funding for barracks.

### Overview of the Fiscal Year 2010 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act:

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:** \$108.9 billion, the same as the President's Request and \$14.5 billion above 2009, for veterans medical care, claims processors, and facility improvements. In addition, for the first time ever, \$48.2 billion is provided in advance appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for three medical accounts: medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities.

**Veterans Health Administration (VHA):** \$45.1 billion, the same as the President's Request and \$4.4 billion above 2009 after adjusting for transfers approved by the Committee on January 6, 2009, for veterans medical care to include:

- **Medical Services:** \$34.7 billion, the same as the President's Request and \$4.0 billion above 2009 after adjusting for approved transfers, to improve access to medical services for all veterans.

- **Mental Health:** \$4.6 billion, the same as the President's Request and \$800 million above 2009, for mental health care.

- **Assistance for Homeless Vets:** \$3.2 billion, the same as the President's Request and \$949 million above 2009, includes \$26 million for a Presidential Initiative to combat homelessness, \$150 million for the homeless grants and per diem program, \$20 million for supportive services for low income veterans and families, in addition to \$21 million to hire additional personnel for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program.

- **Rural Health:** The Department estimates that \$440 million will be spent in fiscal year 2010 on innovative practices to improve access to care for veterans in rural areas. More than 3.2 million (41%) of enrolled veterans live in rural or highly rural areas.

- **Medical and Prosthetic Research:** \$580 million, the same as the President's Request and \$70 million above 2009, to include a \$48 million increase for research to address the critical needs of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.

**Major and Minor Construction:** \$1.9 billion, \$123 million above the President's Request and \$252 million above 2009.

**General Operating Expenses:** \$2.1 billion, \$132 million below the President's Request and \$290 million above 2009, to enable the Department to hire roughly 1,200 additional claims processors to continue to work down the backlog of benefits claims and to reduce the time to process new claims. The most recent VA quarterly status report estimates that nearly 397,000 claims are pending. Additionally, the bill funds the Paralympics Program at the fully authorized amount of \$10 million.

**Inspector General:** \$106 million to include increased funding to provide additional oversight personnel including initiatives regarding financial audit and information technology program

reviews.

**MILITARY CONSTRUCTION:** \$23.2 billion, \$1.8 billion below 2009 is provided for the base programs. The decrease from 2009 is attributable to the expected decline in BRAC construction requirements and the success of the family housing privatization program. In addition, \$1.4 billion is provided for Overseas Contingency Operations, for a total funding level in the bill of \$24.6 billion, \$226 million above the President's Request and \$472 million below 2009.

- **Trainee Troop Housing Initiative:** \$450 million to accelerate the Army's program to modernize troop housing facilities for trainees. The Army has a need for \$2.2 billion to bring all 115,413 trainee barracks spaces up to standard and the program currently is not scheduled to finish until 2017.
- **Guard and Reserve Initiative:** \$200 million in additional funding is provided for Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy and Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve construction to address critical unfunded requirements, in recognition of the tremendous contributions made by Guard and Reserve personnel to emergency assistance, homeland security, and national defense.
- **BRAC 1990 Environmental Cleanup:** \$537 million, \$140 million above the President's Request and \$78 million above 2009, to address the large unfunded backlog of environmental cleanup for bases that were closed during the four previous BRAC rounds.
- **2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Re-stationing:** \$7.5 billion, same as the President's request, to implement base closures and realignments, and support the re-stationing of troops and their families from overseas to the United States.
- **Military Housing:** \$2 billion, same as the President's Request, to further eliminate inadequate military housing.
- **Overseas Contingency Operations:** \$1.4 billion to support additional military construction requirements to support operations and troop increases in Afghanistan.

## RELATED AGENCIES

**American Battle Monuments Commission:** \$61.8 million, \$1.5 million above the President's Request and \$2.3 million above 2009. This funding provides for the care and operation of our military monuments and cemeteries around the world.

**United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims:** \$28.1 million, including \$2.8 million for the Pro Bono Program to provide assistance to low income veterans.

**Cemeterial Expenses:** \$42.5 million, \$5.3 million above the President's Request and \$5.8 million above 2009, for Arlington cemetery. The additional funding will enable relocation of power and telephone line to make ground available for over 8,000 gravesites.

**Armed Forces Retirement Home:** \$134 million, the same as the President's Request and \$71 million above 2009, for the Armed Forces Retirement Home, including \$72 million for capital expenditures.